



Governor Northam's COVID-19 Briefing: July 28, 2020

COVID-19 in Virginia:

- **Total Cases: 86,994; Deaths: 2,095;** Total number hospitalized and positive for COVID-19: 848 (436 more are hospitalized and waiting for test confirmation); **640 ventilators now in use** in Virginia (21% of capacity)
- All Virginia Health Districts percentage of positive tests: 7.3%

Top Takeaways:

- **Increasing restrictions in Hampton Roads begin 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 31:**
 - **No alcohol served after 10 p.m.**
 - **Indoor dining at 50% capacity**
 - **Gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited.**

Governor:

- We have been **closely watching Virginia's COVID-19 data, with a concerning watch on Hampton Roads (HR).**
- These are tough times, and everyone is hurting
 - Children are scared, confused and frustrated
 - Parents of kids with autism
 - People who want to visit parents in nursing homes
 - Some having trouble putting food on the table, and keeping a roof over their heads
 - People who are lonely and starting to lose hope.
- **There is a path out of this.** The vaccine is being fast-tracked and we need to continue to follow the regulations and **continue to practice mask wearing, social distancing, handwashing and not participate in gatherings.**
- We are getting the virus under control in many areas. Nursing homes are only 1% positive of those tested. Continuing to test in congregant settings as needed.
- Hospitals have discharged **almost 12,000 people who recovered from COVID-19**
- New tools to help you pay for rent, etc., putting **\$70 Million of CARES Act** funds in that program

BE not afraid, don't grow weary, we will get through this.

- Don't feel helpless, we have the power to turn it around. Wear your masks, keep social distance, stay at home and help out friends and family members. Donate to food banks, volunteer to deliver food to homes.
- Heard of a woman who is opening her home so five children can learn there.
- Hard that you can't see and hear it, but it's real.

Met today w/ national advisor Dr. Deborah Birx.

- We discussed the public health data and she was complimentary of our efforts
- She met with community members who told her we are following the basic CDC guidelines
- Rising spread among young people, especially in HR
- Now testing 17,000 to 20,000 each day. Percent positive curve looks better than the case number curve. We are concerned about HR and Peninsula 10.8% positive tests
- Virginia is just 6% test positivity for rest of state, without HR and Peninsula.
- Seeing a significant increase in younger people and larger social gatherings. Federal team from FEMA was in HR last week and the mayors have a unified commitment. Taking additional steps beginning at 12 a.m. Friday morning:
 - No alcohol after 10 p.m.
 - Indoor dining only allowed at 50% capacity
 - Gatherings of more than 50 will be prohibited.
- This week state will begin process of sending \$645 Million CARES funds to localities.
 - Giving a lot more to localities than required (15% required), we are giving 50% of the state funds to local governments
 - This money will be used for Rent/Eviction assistance, Food security, etc.
- We have a path forward and it will take all of us to get rid of this virus. Must reduce the numbers by following guidelines.

Dr. Oliver:

- New cases: 922 since yesterday
- Tests: 20,138 done yesterday
- Importance of wearing masks emphasized, we have suspended some permits in the Tidewater area for those who were not following guidelines. Keep wearing masks to protect others.

Q&A

Q: Dr. Birx has specific concerns about regions? Can you further explain why regional application of rules is better?

A: We use a set of metrics, including percentage of positivity, hospital capacity, PPE supplies and the ability to track and trace. They are all important. Have to stay ahead of the curve with these numbers trending up. We will continue enforcement and will follow numbers in various regions.

Q: Are we testing every single person in nursing homes?

A: Dr. Forlano: There's guidance to where we test, almost all have baseline testing already done. Facilities are doing weekly testing as they can. Bringing some new teams in to continue testing.

Q: About the additional restrictions in HR, will that effect surrounding areas?

A: That's a good question, and we continue to follow the numbers on daily basis, and if that happens, we will take additional action.

Q: If we haven't seen 14 days of declining cases, what options are available?

A: We will do what needs to be done, monitor for 2-3 weeks after these changes and will follow trends. If numbers trend down, we will lift the guidelines, but the most important thing is to be safe and responsible.

Q: Last week, some Virginians said it was taking a week or more for some test results? What is being done about that?

A: We did have a significant discussion about this. It is unacceptable that test results come in 10-14 days, especially considering the need for contact tracing. We need to look at antigen tests on the spot. We are moving toward that, so people know when to quarantine. We are also looking at pool testing, for instance in dorms on college campuses, it can work well. We have a disconnect with our scientists and President and need to work together and not cause confusion.

Q: What options are there to best use testing capacity?

A: Increasing community tests. Turnaround time with state labs, it's 1-2 days turnaround time some private labs have the longer times.

Q: Why have you not required visitors from other states to quarantine like some other states?

A: We are encouraging folks to quarantine when they come back from somewhere with higher rates of infection. We are listening and watching our tracers and will take further actions as necessary. Dr. Birx has advocated for masks, staying home and social distance, not "Liberate Virginia" like the President.

Q: What thresholds are we looking at in regions to consider changes?

A: You need to take action today to prevent larger numbers two weeks from now. Trying to work together safely and responsibly and follow the guidelines.

Q: What about the prevalence of testing, especially in schools?

A: Dr. Cary: We have daily and weekly contact with schools by our testing task force. Tests take 48-72 hours at longest from state labs. Some others 7-10 days. There have been spot shortages of antigen reagents...dealing with national shortage.

A: Governor: What is very concerning is the inequity in testing. Asymptomatic people can spread it, like kids going back to school, etc. Good example is the recent outbreak in baseball teams.

Q: Protesters what about them getting sick?

A: Public safety is always our top concern, but it is very important that peaceful protesters are encouraged.

Q: How to reach out to communities with hotspots?

A: We have been doing community testing drives, distributing masks and such, using social media to get the word out to folks.

Q: You seem to appeal to people's good nature, but how do you answer those who say you're fearmongering? And that it's a hoax?

A: We've lost more than 2,000 Virginians. I tell them that if you don't think it's real, go talk to the families of those who've lost loved ones. Listen to the Emergency Room staff who are covered in PPE for their entire workdays. LISTEN to the people who were on vents and then were discharged.

Q: Encouraging mask wearing, especially in multi-generational households?

A: I have personally started wearing a mask at all times except when running in 100-degree weather. It must become a part of our daily routines. Get in the habit of washing your hands and wearing a mask.

Closing: Keep up the good work and we will let you know when the next briefing will be, but it will be scheduled about a week from now.